

TOP SECRET/SPECAT

March 25, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM: Al Haig

SUBJECT: ARVN Morale in the Wake of
Lamson 719

Attached is a message from General Abrams to the Chairman commenting on ARVN morale in the wake of Lamson 719. General Abrams states that certain units' morale may have been affected due to the extended length of the combat, heavy casualties and the difficulty of terrain. He points out that such units as the 4th Battalion, 1st Regiment and the 2d Battalion, 3d Regiment were especially hard hit.

General Abrams estimates that those units whose morale has suffered will, over time, enjoy an increase in morale as replacements arrive and unit accomplishments become more widely known.

Attachment

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ARMY review completed.

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

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DELIVER DURING NORMAL DUTY HOURS.

SUBJECT: MORALE OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE FORCES(U)

REF: JCS 202237Z MAR 71 (TS/SPECAT/EXCLUSIVE)

1. (TS) REFERENCE REQUESTS MY VIEWS AS TO THE VALIDITY OF RECENT NEWS MEDIA REPORTS REGARDING LOW MORALE OF ARVN TROOPS RETURNING FROM THE LAMSON AREA, AND MY IMPRESSION OF THE OVERALL SITUATION WITHIN ARVN FORCES ENGAGED IN COMBAT.

2. (TS) FIELD REPORTS INDICATE THAT MORALE OF CERTAIN COMBAT UNITS IN THE 1ST ARVN DIVISION, MARINE DIVISION, AND THE AIRBORNE DIVISION SUFFERED AS A RESULT OF THE LAMSON 719 OPERATION. I ATTRIBUTE THIS SITUATION TO THE FACT THAT MANY OF THESE UNITS WERE HEAVILY ENGAGED FOR EXTENDED PERIODS OF TIME, AND WERE

MESSAGE CENTER

OPERATING OVER DIFFICULT TERRAIN WHICH HAD BEEN HELD BY THE ENEMY FOR MANY YEARS. AS A RESULT, SOME OF THE UNITS SUFFERED

PAGE 2 RHMSMVA9354 T O P S E C R E T SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

HEAVY CASUALTIES. TO CITE AN EXAMPLE, THE 4TH BATTALION, 1ST REGIMENT, 1ST ARVN DIVISION LOST 50 KIA AND 80 WIA IN A HEAVY ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ENEMY ON 17 MARCH. IN SPITE OF THE CASUALTIES SUSTAINED AND THE LOSS OF ITS HIGHLY RESPECTED COMMANDER, THE 4TH BATTALION FOUGHT VALIANTLY, ACCOUNTING FOR 567 ENEMY KIA. ANOTHER EXAMPLE IS THAT OF THE 2ND BN, 3D REGT WHICH WAS HEAVILY ENGAGED WITH THE ENEMY FOR SEVERAL DAYS, FOUGHT WELL, ENDED UP WITH 110 EFFECTIVES AND YET IS REPORTED TO HAVE MAINTAINED ITS ESPRIT.

3. (S) MY IMPRESSION OF THE OVERALL SITUATION WITHIN ARVN FORCES PARTICIPATING IN THIS OPERATION IS THAT THE GENERAL PERFORMANCE AND THE SPECIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL SOLDIERS AND THE MAJORITY OF THEIR UNITS WERE VERY CREDITABLE. CASUALTIES HAVE REDUCED THE STRENGTH AND WEAKENED THE LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE AT THE LOWER LEVELS IN A FEW UNITS. HOWEVER, I EXPECT THE MORALE OF THESE UNITS TO IMPROVE AND EVENTUALLY REACH THE HIGH LEVEL ENJOYED BY OTHER PARTICIPANTS IN OPERATION LAMSON AS REPLACEMENTS ARE MADE AVAILABLE AND UNIT ACCOMPLISHMENTS BECOME MORE WIDELY KNOWN.

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